

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2880

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, PO
SUBJECT: AZORES BASE TALKS: GOP INTERAGENCY MEETINGS

REF: LISBON 2659

1. VILLAS BOAS, FONMIN'S DIRGEN FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, BRIEFED DCM ON LAST WEEK'S MEETINGS OF GOP INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE (IMC) ON BASE TALKS (REFTEL). HE DESCRIBED MEETINGS AS MAKING "SOME PROGRESS."
 2. AZOREANS: ACCORDING VILLAS BOAS, AZOREAN REPS WERE SERIOUS FOCUSED ON OUR OCTOBER 1977 NON-PAPER IN A GENERAL WAY. THEY RAISED ISSUES OF LABOR ARRANGEMENTS AT BASE, COMMERCIAL AIR ACCESS TO LAJES, SIZE OF ECONOMIC QUID -- BUT DID NOT REQUEST IMC TO TAKE A POSITION ON THESE MATTERS.
 3. ONLY SPECIFIC AZOREAN RESPONSE WAS TO LEAVE A LIST OF "PRIOR QUESTIONS," I.E. QUERIES REQUIRING ANSWERS BY GOP BEFORE AZOREANS RESPOND FORMALLY. VILLAS BOAS DESCRIBED "PRIOR QUESTIONS" AS A DELAYING TACTIC, LARGELY IRRELEVANT, ACCUSING GOP OF NOT CONDUCTING TALKS IN BEST MANNER
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POSSIBLE, AND REplete WITH THINLY-VEILED POLITICAL ATTACKS ON CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. HE SAID FONMIN SA MACHADO WAS INCENSED WITH TENOR OF "PRIOR QUESTIONS," REGARDING THEM AS A PSD-INSPIRED THRUST AGAINST A CENTER DEMOCRAT FONMIN. IN ANSWER TO DCM'S QUERY, VILLAS BOAS WAS NOT CERTAIN WHEN FONMIN WOULD RESPOND TO "PRIOR QUESTIONS." DCM STRESSED NEED FOR

EARLY REPLY, BUT VILLAS BOAS REMAINED NONCOMMITTAL.

4. MILITARY: AIR FORCE GENERAL PEREIRA, MILITARY REP ON IMC TOOK LITTLE PART IN MEETINGS. HE FORMALLY REQUESTED, HOWEVER, THAT FONMIN QUERY US AGAIN WHETHER OUR PREFERENCE FOR EQUIPMENT, NOT INFRASTRUCTURE, AS MILITARY QUID WAS DEFINITIVE.

5. DCM EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT THIS QUESTION WAS STILL FLOATING AROUND. EMPHASIZED THAT WE HAD EXPLORED IT IN DEPTH WITH VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF GOP, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, LAST SUMMER. ANSWER WE HAD GIVEN WAS THAT EQUIPMENT WAS PREFERABLE, BUT THAT IT DID NOT HAVE TO BE COMBAT-RELATED. VILLAR BOAS AGREED. SAID MILITARY KNEW ALL THIS, BUT WERE HAVING DIFFICULTY MAKING UP THEIR MINDS. HE SAID ONLY THE PRESIDENT COULD OR WOULD RESOLVE THIS ISSUE. (COMMENT: WE AGREE.) DCM AGREED TO QUERY WASHINGTON RE DEFINITIVE RESPONSE ON INFRASTRUTURE.

6. COMMENT: VILLAS BOAS WAS PUTTING THE BEST FACE ON MINIMAL RESULTS ACHIEVED AT THESE MEETINGS. WHILE THE AZOREANS APPEAR NOT TO HAVE REJECTED OUR NON-PAPER SUBMITTED TO THEM AT IMC MARCH 2, NEITHER HAVE THEY ACCEPTED IT. THE MILITARY RESPONSE WAS NO RESPONSE, AND RESURFACING THE ARMY-PREFERRED INFRASTRUCTURE VS. AIR FORCE-PREFERRED CONFIDENTIAL

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QUIPMENT ISSUE INDICATES MILITARY INFIGHTING CONTINUES.

7. IN VIEW OF THIS DISAPPOINTING REPORT, I ASKED FOR AN EARLY MEETING WITH FONMIN SA MACHADO AND WILL BE SEEING HIM APRIL 18. MY EXPECTATION IS THAT HE'LL BE SYMPATHETIC TO OUR DESIRE FOR PROMPT ACTION, BUT NOT ABLE TO DO MUCH ABOUT IT. SO I AM PREPARED TO GO HIGHER, AND HARDER, AS NECESSARY.

8. MEANWHILE, I WOULD APPRECIATE WASHINGTON AGENCIES TAKING ANOTHER FAST LOOK AT THE EQUIPMENT VS. INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUE TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR REPLY OF LAST YEAR IS STILL VALID. BLOOMFIELD

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